



## **CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

Eight years after the first Berlin Western Balkans Summit in 2014, the Heads of Government of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, as well as the Heads of State or Government or appointed representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, and representatives of the European Union (EU) and of international and regional bodies and organisations met in person in Berlin on 3 November 2022 for the Summit Meeting of the Berlin Process.

1. The Berlin Process participants reaffirmed the key role of the Berlin Process as a driver of regional cooperation and accelerator of the EU integration process. They highlighted its important inclusive format that treats all Western Balkans countries as equals, which serves as catalyst for economic integration, investment and connectivity projects aimed at fostering reconciliation, security, growth, employment and prosperity.
2. Building on Ministerial Meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Energy in the past few weeks, the discussion took stock of progress, ongoing challenges and prospects for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, with a focus on the Common Regional Market, Energy Security and the Green Agenda. Participants also had an exchange with representatives of youth and civil society.

### **Common Regional Market (CRM)**

3. The participants warmly welcomed the signing of the Agreement on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in the Western Balkans and the Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects based on EU rules, which significantly advance the mobility of students, academics and professionals in the Western Balkans, and called upon Western Balkans partners to initiate negotiations on the remaining regional agreements on free movement of people.
4. The participants also warmly welcomed the signing of the Agreement on Freedom of Movement with ID Cards in the Western Balkans as a key milestone of the Common Regional Market and a significant step forward to removing barriers to mobility of people in the region, and encouraged the Western Balkans partners to advance the finalisation of the Agreement on Freedom of Movement of Third Party Citizens within the Western Balkans.
5. The participants commended the efforts made by the Western Balkans in the implementation of the CRM. This agenda remains a decisive and all-inclusive process to achieve economic resilience of the region in particular against the backdrop of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine

and post-COVID-19 recovery. It will enable further integration of the Western Balkans into the EU Single Market.

6. On this note, the participants praised the key coordinating role of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Central European Free Trade Agreement Secretariat (CEFTA) in the successful negotiations of the CRM mobility agreements.

### **Energy Security/Transition, Green Agenda and Climate**

7. The participants agreed that the energy crisis and the transition to renewable energies can only be managed through deeper regional cooperation. They agreed that Europe needs to rethink its energy supply and energy security. This is crucial not only to ensure affordable and reliable energy, but also for fighting against climate change and reducing environmental pollution.
8. For this purpose, the Leaders of the Western Balkans Six adopted a Joint Declaration on Energy Security and Green Transition in the Western Balkans<sup>1</sup>. The commitments therein were supported substantially by statements of support from other Berlin Process participants, in particular by the EU Commission.
9. The participants reaffirmed the region's commitments towards the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) to ensure carbon neutrality by 2050.
10. The participants also welcomed that the Western Balkans countries will support the setting of the 2030 energy and climate targets at the Energy Community Ministerial Council meeting in December 2022. The envisioned regional climate partnership by the German Government will help intensify the political dialogue as well as the technical and financial cooperation regarding the Green Agenda.

### **Migration**

11. The participants agreed that the current significant increase in migration activity, especially in the Western Balkans region, creates major challenges for all participants of the Berlin Process, which require consistent and coordinated measures in response. These measures include targeted action against the smuggling and trafficking of migrants and refugees, effective border management, the creation of viable asylum and migration systems, and dependable procedures for returns to countries of origin.
12. The participants stressed also the importance of aligning the visa policy of the Western Balkan countries with the European visa acquis, which is also required by the EU accession process.

### **Security**

13. The participants acknowledged the importance of security cooperation within the Berlin Process and committed to the continuation of a coherent regional approach through existing security platforms and projects. They also concluded that different forms of organised crime, illicit financing of organised crime and terrorist activities, corruption, and money laundering remain an important challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina has not approved this declaration until adoption at the summit and is invited to do so at a later stage.

14. The participants agreed to strengthen investigations of corruption in particular. To do so, they agreed to strive to expand the capacities of their national agencies for investigating corruption, to improve regional cooperation and coordination, and to reinforce existing networks for international cooperation. Applying and implementing the measures from the Illicit Finance and Anti-Corruption Roadmap consistently and rigorously is an important part of this effort.
15. The participants also identified the necessity for more cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, and fighting different forms of hybrid threats across the Western Balkans. On this note, they welcomed the German Government's initiative to create a Joint Partnership with all partners of the Berlin Process to strengthen Cyber Resilience in the Western Balkans taking into account existing initiatives.
16. Participants reconfirmed the strategic importance of the timely implementation of the "Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024". The participants noted with appreciation the achievements in establishing fully functioning Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Commissions and their contribution to regional cooperation, as well as their work on constantly updating national SALW strategies.

#### **Roma Integration**

17. The participants welcomed the conclusions from the Third Ministerial Meeting on Roma Inclusion on 19 October 2022 in Podgorica, in which the Western Balkans countries agreed to strengthen the ongoing work on Roma integration in the fields of housing, education, employment, green and digital agendas, Roma responsive budgeting, as well as monitoring and reporting systems.

#### **Youth, Education and Culture**

18. The participants welcomed the German government's initiative to create a Youth Culture Fund in the Western Balkans under the administration of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), with the aim of bringing together the cultural scenes from across the region together by supporting grass-roots cultural initiatives in the region. They reaffirmed that this would serve as a valuable contribution to fostering good-neighbourly relations and mutual understanding, aspects also important for reconciliation.
19. The participants welcomed the continuation of cooperation through the Joint Science Conferences co-ordinated by the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

#### **Future of the Berlin Process**

20. The participants stressed the wish for the continuation of the Berlin Process in order to harness the full potential of improved and inclusive regional cooperation.
21. The participants agreed to hold the next Berlin Process summit 2023 in Albania.